

1+2+2 Programs (College Credit Articulation Maps)



Problem Overview

Community colleges appeal to many students seeking a four-year degree path because of accessibility and cost-savings; however, among the nearly one million students nationwide who started at a community college in 2016, just one in seven earned a bachelor's degree within six years. ([Binkley, 2023](#)) One of the biggest obstacles is known as credit loss: when students take classes that never end up counting toward a degree. Sometimes it's a result of inadequate advising. Without clear guidance, students take courses they don't need. Additional barriers arise from differentiated university requirements, which have varying rules for evaluating transfer credits.

([Binkley, 2023](#))

Illinois is no stranger to these problems, with seven of ten community college transfer degree or certificate completers indicating they even intended to attempt to transfer to universities in 2022. ([ICCB, 2022](#)) Regardless of the cause, the result is often the same. Students take longer to finish their degrees, costing more in tuition. For many, the extra work becomes too much to bear, and they ultimately drop out. While statewide efforts like the Articulation Initiative, Illinois Board of Higher Education's Transfer Data Portal, and the longitudinal data system are making strides to gain accountability and transparency of these problems, local and regional partnerships offer a solution.

Strategy Summary

"2+2" programs combine two years of community college with two years of university for the completion of a traditional bachelor's degree. Many students will attempt to create their own 2+2 program independently, often without regard for their university selection upon starting community college. The best 2+2 programs are those wherein a community college and university partner to articulate a four-year plan for degree seeking students, addressing the problem of credit loss and unclear student guidance. This articulation is commonly outlined in a "degree map" complete with course selections, sequencing, and course crosswalks.

"1+2+2" programs would add an earlier start to these programs through select dual credit/enrollment, getting students started as a grade 11 or 12 student on courses that ultimately will count toward their initial degree at the community college and transfer on to the partnering university. Depending on the amount of college credit achieved in high school, a student may be able to spend one or two fewer semesters at the community college.

Evidence of Success

Some institutions are partnering to specifically align teacher-licensure programs which prove effective in increasing the pool of licensed teacher candidates. Elmhurst College (a four-year University in Elmhurst, Illinois) is partnering with the College of DuPage (a community college in DuPage County) for two programs targeting aspiring educators. COD has several 2+2 programs, as shown on their [website](#).



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One 2+2 program at the COD is for Elementary Teacher Education specifically. The [degree map](#) shows how students will complete most of the general education requirements at COD and some education-specific courses, namely Introduction to Education, Educational Psychology, and Education for Exceptional Children. In two years at COD, students will complete nearly all general education requirements and have nine completed credit hours in the field of their choosing. COD also has a degree map outlined for an [English major with a Secondary Education](#) (grades 9-12) licensure.

Many other community colleges and universities have partnerships in place, but often not for education degree pathways specifically. Even if there are partnerships in place for education, it may only be for specific licenses like physical education or elementary.

Some institutions are taking 2+2 programming one step further, by partnering to use community colleges as institutional extensions of university accreditation. NIU's and ECC's Elementary Education with Bilingual/ESL partnership, called the [PLEDGE program](#), is a great example. Their PLEDGE (Partnering to Lead and Empower District-Grown Educators) initiative combines innovative strategies, impactful programs, and purposeful collaboration with our partners to expand and diversify the educator workforce to match the diversity of students in Illinois' K-12 schools.

Parkland College and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign are also partnering to make 2+2 a shared responsibility. The [Parkland Pathways](#) program offers transfer opportunities with alignment to all majors offered at UIUC. Students receive personalized academic counseling and access to coursework exclusive to UIUC students as they work toward guaranteed admission to the university.

Other examples of attempts to inform and support transfer students include institution-wide course crosswalks, as is done by Illinois State University with several community colleges. [These documents](#) showcase the exact transferability by course number at each community college. Southern Illinois University Carbondale takes this concept one step further through their interactive transfer portal—a student facing online dashboard wherein a student can confirm transferability and build their own plan.

Other Considerations

Eliminating real and perceived barriers is the dual purpose of establishing and marketing 2+2 programs for educational licensure. When students know there is a clear pathway to a career, they are more likely to start and finish that path. Here are some things to consider if implementing this strategy:

- 1 What universities in your region offer educational licensure programs?
- 2 What community colleges in your region offer education licensure transfer programs?
- 3 Do you have a dual-credit partnership in place with a community college already?
- 4 Where do these programs already exist in your region?
- 5 Do you have staff in place that would be qualified to offer applicable dual credit?
- 6 Would other local districts in your region want to partner or collaborate with this effort?